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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/11/2027
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SUBJECT: KUWAITI MUSLIM BROTHERS ENCOURAGE DIALOGUE WITH
HAMAS

REF: KUWAIT 195

Classified By: Acting DCM Timothy Lenderking for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C/NF) Summary: Senior leaders in or close to the Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM), the political arm of the Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood, have said in recent meetings that the U.S. has made a major tactical error in refusing to deal with Hamas. Citing their close ties to Hamas leader Khaled Mish'al, who grew up in Kuwait, the ICM figures all insisted that despite strident public statements Hamas is willing to negotiate and to accept Israel's existence. The ICM leaders see U.S. efforts to isolate Hamas as a major tactical flaw. End Summary.

¶2. (C/NF) Mubarak Saadoun Al-Mutawa, an ex-member of the Muslim Brotherhood who maintains close ties to the movement, reported to Poloff in a June meeting that he used to employ Hamas political leader Khaled Mish'al as a teacher. (Note: Khaled Mish'al grew up in Kuwait so many Kuwaiti Islamists make credible claims to know him personally. End note.) Al-Mutawa said that Khaled Mish'al told him recently that Israel's existence was a fact that could not be erased. Al-Mutawa said Hamas shies away from conciliatory statements publicly because they would look like a defeat rather than a strategic choice. But Al-Mutawa insisted that behind closed doors Hamas is willing to deal. (Note: Over a period of several years, Al-Mutawa has repeatedly told Emboffs that he has the blessing of Hamas to negotiate on its behalf and he repeated his eagerness to do so. End Note.)

¶3. (C/NF) Jassim Muhalhal Al-Yassin, a key senior figure in the ICM, told Poloff on July 10 that the Islamist movement has come to terms with the existence of Israel. Khaled Mish'al, he said, is "one of our sons" (referring to his Kuwaiti upbringing) and "we know that he understands the reality of Israel's existence." Al-Yassin acknowledged that Islamists do not see Israel's existence as just, but that they accept it as a fact that cannot be changed. He ridiculed his own Arab Nationalist past and the wildly unrealistic images created by Gamal Abdul-Nasser of "throwing them (i.e. the Israelis/Jews) into the sea." Such unrealistic visions were possible, he said, when Kuwaitis would get news once a week in the mosque. With the information revolution and the spread of satellite television, Islamists now have a better picture of the world and do not cling to their past delusions. He said that Arabs and Muslims have grown weary of the struggle and simply want to focus on political stability and economic development. However, he warned that some of the younger generation are being radicalized by Arab satellite news images, by global jihadists, and by teenage disaffection stemming from lack of creative outlets in stagnant economies. He concluded that the U.S. still has a chance to convince Muslims that it

supports freedom and democracy, but that the constant rejection by the U.S. of Islamists -- such as the isolation of Hamas or the acquiescence in Hosni Mubarak's repression of the Islamists in Egypt -- will irrevocably alienate Muslims.

14. (C/NF) Issa Majid Al-Shaheen, the former Secretary General of the ICM who spends his summers in Wisconsin, also stressed to PolOff in a recent meeting that Palestine represented the key to working with Islamists throughout the Middle East. He said it was likely Hamas would be ready to make an acceptable compromise on a two-state solution, but that U.S. support for Fatah against the popularly-elected Hamas government would dramatically decrease the chances of reaching the kind of solution the U.S. wants and which Hamas is ready to agree to. He argued that the U.S. has had the opportunity in the last few years to win points with the Islamists by acknowledging their democratic successes in Palestine and Egypt. Instead, the U.S., according to Al-Shaheen, has tried to isolate Hamas by holding the Palestinian people's salaries hostage and tacitly accepted Egypt's measures to diminish Islamist gains in elections. Al-Shaheen characterized the Hamas "coup" as a defensive move against Muhammad Dahlan's murderous Fatah security forces.

15. (C/NF) Former ICM MP Mubarak Al-Dwaylah, who maintains a great deal of influence in the movement, made similar comments. He dismissed the absolutist terms in which Islamist movements are characterized. In the case of Kuwait, he said that he personally does not support establishing an Islamic state. He prefers to simply have people interact with one another in a more Islamic way. On the issue of Hamas, he noted that the United States was doing exactly the opposite of what it should, and that its support of the "Israeli-backed Abbas government" is a serious blow to any

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hope of U.S. cooperation and understanding with the vast numbers of people in the Muslim world with Islamist leanings.

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